

NSC BRIEFING

31 July 1957

COMMUNISTS GAINS IN INDONESIA

I. Communists have registered spectacular gains in recent local elections in Java.

A. In central Java elections on 17 July (for provincial council, 26 of 28 district councils and several municipal councils), with about 90% of vote counted, Communists well in the lead.

1. They have 4 to 3 edge over nearest rivals--Nationalists, who won in '55--with Moslem parties trailing.

2. Communists made significant gains in rural districts where not previously strong.

B. Swing to left was also apparent in Djakarta municipal elections on 22 June, where Communists increased their vote by 40% over 1955 despite smaller turn-out.

1. They rose from a poor fourth to strong second behind Masjumi.

II. Communist success due to energetic, well-financed campaigning.

A. Other important factors have been Communist identification with President Sukarno and his concept of "guided democracy."

Latter refused to support Nationalists as he did in '55.

III. Momentum built up as result of Djakarta and Central Java voting apparently has aided Communists in East Java elections (29 July) and will stand them in good stead in West Java (10 August) and Jogjakarta--a sultanate having provincial status (sometime in September).

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- A. Communists vigorous in all these areas, and probably will win Jogjakarta.
- B. East and West Java areas, however, will test capacity of Communists to win in Moslem strongholds.
 - 1. In '55 Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) won a substantial plurality in East Java defeating second place Communists by more than a million votes.
 - 2. In West Java, Manjumi's winning vote was more than double that of Communists, who finished third behind Nationalists.
- C. Earliest fragmentary returns from East Java cities--where Communists known to be strong--put them well in lead.

IV. Best that can be said about elections is that Communists will not gain immediate control over areas in which they won since the various councils are only advisory to governors appointed by Djakarta.

- A. Communists, nevertheless, will have gained enormous prestige throughout Java.
- B. They will undoubtedly exert increasing influence over village headmen, the "grass roots" administrators who usually deliver the votes.
- C. In addition, Communists will be in a greatly improved position to infiltrate local military and police establishments.
- D. In any event, Communist victories in Java will make dissidents in Sumatra and Celebes more reluctant than ever to come to terms with central gov't.

V. Most serious development may be that Sukarno will interpret elections to mean that Indonesian people want Communist-style gov't, and that he and Communists will try to accommodate them.

A. Since his tours last year of USSR and Communist China, Sukarno's policies and actions have markedly advanced Communist influence in Indonesian government.

- 1. Of 23 positions in present cabinet--formed personally by Sukarno--four headed by persons with long histories of identification with Communist Party and fronts.**
- 2. In Sukarno-dictated "National Council," 18 of 44 members are known or suspected Communists.**
- 3. Six persons with known Communist leanings, including Secretary-General of Party, are close personal advisors of president.**